



# HOW PUREISTS ARE EMBRACING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN 2017

J A N U A R Y P O S T 2017 : W T N A E G W G E M D M C U O N N I S T E Y R I V A E T R I I  
Y E A R O F S U S T A I N , P A U B R L E E L T I O , P U E R R I , B E S X I M B S E F A S O I I B E S A I D E A E  
T O U , W R I I L S D M L I F E

In light of the United Nations' declaration that 2017 is the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, we asked PUREists how they define sustainable tourism (in seven words or less) and to share examples of how they're living up to the ethos.

## KEITH VINCENT CEO of Wilderness Safaris

**Sustainable tourism is:** "Travel that makes the biggest positive difference"

**What we're doing:** "This year – in addition to the ongoing rhino, elephant, community and anti-poaching work in all the seven countries in which we operate – Wilderness Safaris is expanding its focus to build another sustainable conservation economy in the rainforest of the Virunga Volcanoes in Rwanda. Through an ambitious land acquisition and reforestation project with a number of international partners we aim, through a long term project, to increase the population of critically endangered mountain gorillas."



# FRANCESCO GALLI-ZUGARO

## Founder and CEO of [Aqua Expeditions](#)

**Sustainable tourism is:** “Positive impact on community and environment.”

**What we’re doing:** “I am proud to say that after having [partnered with Room to Read](#) in Cambodia and Vietnam we have managed to raise US \$10,000 for our first Room 2 Read Library in Vietnam.”



*Reaksa from Cambodia, photo courtesy of Room to Read*

## AMIT SANKHALA Owner of Encounters Asia

**Sustainable tourism is:** “Connecting wildlife corridors through community partnerships.”

**What we’re doing:** “We will be expanding our star beds this year by aligning ourselves with more villagers for leasing their land, so that wildlife can move between corridors. The camps where the star beds are located give guests the chance to view nocturnal wildlife encounters on clear nights, while providing surrounding landowners an incentive to protect rather than chase off the native wildlife.”



*One of Encounters Asia's 'Star Beds', photo courtesy of Encounters Asia*

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## JALSA URUBSHUROW

### Founder of [Nomadic Expeditions](#)

**Sustainable tourism is:** “Changing minds, not places.”

**What we're doing:** “We have partnered with the World Wildlife Fund's field biologists to offer an exhilarating snow leopard journey. This safari-style trip offers a thrilling adventure for travellers, all while directly benefitting WWF's research and conservation practices, as much of the money earned from the itinerary is [donated to the nonprofit.](#)”



## ENRIQUE UMBERT

### General Manager of [Mountain Lodges of Peru](#)

**Sustainable tourism is:** “A building block for positive change.”

**What we're doing:** “The ancient knowledge involved in traditional textile weaving in Peru is at risk thanks to modern and industrial textile technology (why weave one poncho for two months when you can produce 100 in a day?). The MLP guest-flow to Choquecancha and other local communities has created an incentive for the traditional weavers to preserve their tradition to be able to take advantage of the opportunity of improving their household income through the selling of their textiles. Tourism has helped to sustain this tradition. It's a great example of conservation of cultural heritage. But why stop there? Why not think that Choquecancha can become an iconic destination for the study of natural dyes, traditional weaving techniques and organic fibres for the fashion industry? A place where international fashion students could conduct three-month internships. In this virtuous cycle, the increase perceived value of these aspects of textile production would then re-permeate the local community and possibly provide a new appreciation of the locals' own knowledge and cultural heritage. At that point, the local weavers would not only be incentivised economically to preserve their heritage, but would find a renewed conceptual and functional value in it.”



ASHISH SANGHRAJKA

President of [Big Five Tours & Expeditions](#)

**Sustainable tourism is:** “Conservation of wildlife, habitats, traditional cultures.”

**What we're doing:** “In [Nicaragua](#), while on the walking tours inside the walls of the old city in Granada, one of our sustainable initiatives is visiting a hammock workshop that employs the deaf and mute. Here, we learn to make a hammock and we also ask guests who wish to bring school supplies. The workshop has all the inner city children collecting plastic bags left as waste and depositing them at the workshop. The bags are used to weave what will ultimately be the largest plastic hammock in the world. In return, the workshop provides school supplies to these children, so we want to make you part of our sustainable cause in [Nicaragua](#).”



Photo courtesy of Big Five Tours & Expeditions

## WILBERT DAS

### Founder of [UXUA](#), Trancoso, Brazil

**Sustainable tourism is:** “Preservation.”

**What we’re doing:** “We came into a humble fishing village in Brazil and, by applying a careful approach to restoration of historic properties, we managed to create a year-round tourism industry, where once it was only seasonal, and a rebirth in crafts trades which were dying out. As the world homogenises with global trends it seems destinations with a real sense of place are something of an endangered species. All around us we preach the eternal appeal of keeping things as much as possible in their original condition, and growing the town in respect to its historic style and identity. The biggest challenge is, of course, how to maintain a sense of place and tradition while allowing growth, since growth in a successful destination is inevitable. The key step for us was to create *demand* for the traditional and make development that does *not* respect history seem out-of-fashion. Understanding consumer behaviour and the world of luxury (from which we come after years in the fashion industry), we’ve been sure that the best artisanal work and projects we execute with local craftsmen get coverage in aspirational publications like *Vogue* and *Architectural Digest*, both of which have given our projects cover-stories. Consistently publicising the beauty of craft and organic design influences developers, and the smart money being spent on development in our area has gone to projects that respect

tradition. Today the town is preserving its character and its charm is stronger than ever – if anything it’s growing due to this positive energy around preservation and the charm of so many local people still working in old trades.”



*Photo courtesy of UXUA*

## LESLIE OVERTON

### Managing Director of [Absolute Travel](#)

**Sustainable tourism is:** “Take care. Commit.”

**What we’re doing:** “Right now Absolute Travel is inviting travellers to witness nature at its best on a [rare marine conservation expedition](#) of perspective shifting proportions. They’ll travel through Raja Ampat, Indonesia for ten days on the handmade MSV Silolona liveaboard. Those who go will explore some of the richest and most pristine uninhabited islands on our planet alongside Emmy-award winning conservationist, Shawn Heinrichs, and foremost manta ray expert, Sarah Lewis, then debrief at night on hidden havens they’ve spent years studying. Just by going, travellers will be making a major contribution to protecting these biodiverse water passages, where 70% of the world’s coral reef species and 1,200 different species of fish are represented. Funds raised will help support Blue Sphere Foundation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit founded by Shawn dedicated to safeguarding the world’s oceans. Participants will have the chance to drop into trains of



feeding manta rays, snorkel with juvenile reef sharks and baby manta rays, and kayak and snorkel through blue water mangroves that act as wild nurseries. These are natural treasures on a handful of people will ever see like this. We're making it possible for travellers to go and commit to keeping them wild and flourishing."



*The Silolona in Raja Ampat, photo courtesy of Silolona Sojourns*

## BEV DEIKEL & PATRIS OSCAR

### Owners of [Rosalie Bay Eco Resort](#), Dominica

**Sustainable tourism is:** "Sustainability thrives with community pride."

**What we're doing:** "Bev has been supporting the Dominica National Council of Women for the last couple of years, particularly with women doing organic farming. The resort's Dominica-born chef, Seraphine Hector, is gathering women from the local villages who are interested in learning about organic farming. They will be taught about organic farming and climate change. As the women grow and harvest the crops, they will be able to sell them to Rosalie Bay to help support the resort's food needs, in addition to selling the remaining harvest to outside entities, as means of creating a livelihood for themselves. This new farming initiative continues giving locals usable skills that allow them sustainability both in livelihoods and for the environment."



*Bev (far left) doing her work with the Dominica National Council of Women, photo courtesy of The Resource Foundation*

## JOSÉ KOECHLIN

### Founder of [Inkaterra](#)

**Sustainable tourism is:** “Profitable tourism conserves biodiversity and culture.”

**What we’re doing:** “One of Inkaterra’s main activities is bird watching, for it is one of the most popular and profitable ecotourism activities, with prime opportunities for biodiversity conservation and the encouragement of green jobs. Aiming to showcase Peru as a top destination for bird watching – with more than 1,800 species registered, including 120 endemics – Inkaterra and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology have installed bird cams live streaming from Inkaterra Machu Picchu Pueblo Hotel. All About Birds, Cornell University’s online guide to bird watching with 20 million unique viewers, launched its first broadcast in Peru to view in real time nesting green-and-white hummingbirds, a relatively unknown species endemic to the Eastern slope of the Peruvian Andes. Found by Inkaterra Explorer Guides during incubation, the nest became home to a female caring for two chicks. For about two weeks, the audience was able to enjoy how baby birds matured in their open cup nest until fledging on New Year’s Day. In 20 days, there was 150,000 views from 170 countries and 3.4 million minutes watched – equivalent to six years. Further live streaming will allow viewers to discover Inkaterra Machu Picchu Pueblo Hotel’s unique bird diversity, with 214 species inventoried in its grounds.”



*Photo courtesy of Javier Fernández for Inkaterra*

## SONU SHIVDASANI

### Founder of [Soneva](#)

**Sustainable tourism is:** “Responsible enjoyment of the planet.”

**What we’re doing:** “VITRIC is an NGO (non-governmental organisation) that was set up in the island of Maalhos to provide a safe and constant supply of drinking water and to create a replicable model for all of the islands in the Maldives to be free of single-use plastic water bottles. We hope the project will create a profitable alternative to plastic bottled water in Maalhos. The equipment consists of a desalination system, which will extract and filter water from the sea. We will further filter the water, add minerals, purify it and then bottle it. This will be done using solar-powered equipment. The bottles used will be 20-litre, reusable polycarbonate bottles that will be delivered to residents’ homes. Smaller, glass bottles will be delivered to local shops, cafés, guesthouses, schools and clinics. Both types of bottles can be reused many thousands of times, thus eliminating vast quantities of single-use plastic water bottles from being discarded into the sea or jungle, or incinerated. Not only will the project provide higher quality water at a cheaper price currently available on the market, but it will also reduce the local community’s exposure to water-borne illnesses and water shortages in the dry season.”



ECO CENTRO  
"WASTE TO WEALTH"

ZITA COBB

Founder & Innkeeper of [Fogo Island Inn](#)

**Sustainable tourism is:** "Nurtures the cultural and economic sustainability of communities."

**What we're doing:** "The latest social enterprise undertaking of our nonprofit, the [Shorefast Foundation](#), is Fogo Island Fish, which specialises in sustainable, hand-line cod and pays premium prices to fishers. We're selling to island restaurants and 30 Toronto restaurants now serve Fogo Island Fish."



*Photo courtesy of Fogo Island Inn*